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NASHUA — Elected officials joined a rally with approximately 350 defense workers Monday, warning that a national defense crisis could be looming if action is not taken.

All four members of New Hampshire's congressional delegation gathered on the eve of the 9/11 terror attacks to share concerns about \$500 billion in automatic spending cuts required by the Budget Control Act of 2011. They stressed that defense spending is already absorbing a 10-year, \$487 billion reduction.

If the defense budget is slashed on Jan. 1, 2013, Congressman Charles Bass said it would be disruptive and counterproductive to American security.

"And it is so unnecessary because we know in the end that America cannot survive with a gutted defense, which is what we would end up with if this went through," said Bass.

Republican Congressman Frank Guinta said New Hampshire will lose about 4,000 jobs.

"This is real, and it is wrong," he said.

Employees at BAE Systems are responsible for creating technology for world-class warriors charged with protecting our country and the world, according to Guinta, who said their jobs need to be preserved.

Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte agreed, saying the work being done at BAE Systems is crucial. She described the workers as silent partners in protecting America.

"We hear you, and the louder you are, frankly, it kicks all of us to get this done," she said.

The speakers at Monday's Second To None rally noted a report by Stephen Fuller, an economist at George Mason University, who predicts that the cuts will place more than 2 million American jobs at risk, and increase the U.S. unemployment rate by about 1.5 percent.

Ayotte said that national defense officials estimate it will result in the smallest Navy since the beginning of World War I, the smallest Army and Marine Corps since the beginning of World War II and the smallest Air Force in its history.

The cuts are required after the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction failed to agree on \$1.2 trillion in deficit reductions last fall.

Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen said if the problem isn't solved soon, it could still be a problem a year from now.

Dan Gobel, president of the Electronic Systems sector for BAE, described sequestration as a "powerful storm on the horizon" that could have a devastating effect on the nation, leaving the armed forces in a vulnerable position — a sobering thought on the eve of Sept. 11, he said.

Monday's rally was hosted by BAE Systems, in conjunction with the Aerospace Industries Association.

Fred Downey, vice-president of national security for AIA, called the budget cuts "mindless," saying they will have a brutal impact on jobs nationwide.